

**REMARKS**

This Response is responsive to the Final Office Action mailed December 19, 2007 ("Office Action").

**Claim Amendments**

Claim 8 has been amended to recite that the hydrocarbon fuel is fed into the first module – thereby more positively reciting the location of the first module with respect to the other modules (Office Action p. 9). Support for this amendment can be found throughout the specification and particularly in paragraphs 0016, 0018, and 0021. No new matter is introduced by this amendment.

**Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 102(b)**

Claims 18-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Abe et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,576,203 B2).

In addition to the arguments previously presented, as recited in claim 19, the inert materials are separate and apart from a catalyst for any purpose. In contrast, as acknowledged by the Examiner (Office Action, p. 9), the inert material of Abe acts as a catalyst carrier. Applicants respectfully disagree. Applicants assert that acting as a catalyst carrier does constitute a purpose. For these reasons, claim 19, and the claims which depend from claim 19, is not believed to be anticipated by Abe. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 18-19 under § 102(b) as being anticipated by Abe is respectfully requested.

Claims 4, 8-14, and 20-28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Gonjo (US 6,159,434).

In addition to the arguments previously presented, claim 8 has been amended to recite that the hydrocarbon fuel is fed into the first module – thereby more positively reciting the location of the first module with respect to the other modules (Office Action p. 9). Support for this amendment can be found throughout the specification and particularly in paragraphs 0016, 0018, and 0021. No new matter is introduced by this amendment.

As a result, Applicants respectfully assert that the recitation in claim 8 does impart further structural limitation or definition to the module relative to the other modules present in the apparatus. For these reasons, claim 8, and the claims which depend from claim 8, is not believed to be anticipated by Gonjo. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 4, 8-14, and 20-28 under § 102(b) as being anticipated by Gonjo is respectfully requested.

**Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103(a)**

Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gonjo as applied to claim 8, and further in view of Nishida et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,387,399) ("Nishida"). Based on the amendment to claim 8, claim 3 is believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 3 under §103(a) is respectfully requested.

Claims 5-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gonjo as applied to claim 8, and further in view of Skala et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,238,815) ("Skala"). Based on the amendment to claim 8, claims 5-7 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 5-7 under § 103(a) is respectfully requested.

Claims 15-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gonjo as applied to claims 8 and 20 and further in view of Clawson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,126,908) ("Clawson '908"). Based on the amendment to claim 8, claims 15-16 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 15-16 under § 103(a) is respectfully requested.

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All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection are believed to have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and

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that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Melissa Patangia  
Attorney for Applicants  
Reg. No. 52098

June 18, 2008  
Customer No. 38393  
Chevron Services Company  
P. O. Box 4368  
Houston, Texas 77210-4368  
713-754-2917 (Voice)  
713-754-2944 (Fax)